

MIDTESOL MATTERS

Summer / Fall
2010

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Paula Moore—Missouri

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PRESIDENT'S FAREWELL MESSAGE

BY SUZANNE VAN DER VALK, MIDTESOL PRESIDENT

It seems like only yesterday . . . well, not really. But my year as President of MIDTESOL has gone by quickly. There are parts of it I'd like to relive, some because they were interesting, satisfying, or fun, and some because I now know things I didn't know then and I'd like another crack at a problem. But time moves forward, and so must I.

One of the things that surprised me about the past year (and actually the year before as well) is the connection with TESOL through the Affiliate Leadership Council that came with the Vice-President and President positions. I had the opportunity to attend the Affiliate Workshops and Colloquia in Denver and Boston with English teachers from all over the world. This provided me with a larger vision of the affiliate system and reminded me to think of MIDTESOL in a larger context than just the American Midwest. Donald Weasenforth, the Affiliate Leadership Council Chair, will be presenting both a Workshop and Plenary at our upcoming conference in Dubuque. I hope we will also be able to talk about possible connections with other affiliates.

One of the things that did NOT surprise me about the past year is the great support and camaraderie that exists on our Board. While there are duties specified in each job description, we do all depend on each other in many ways. It has been very enjoyable and rewarding to work with such

a dedicated group. And again, I can see my institution and myself in a larger context.

During the past year, we have had an inquiry from KATESOL about a possible merger with MIDTESOL. Very preliminary discussions are underway, and we are looking forward to meeting some KATESOL folks at the conference. While there are lots of details to be worked out, there are also advantages to sharing the work of running the organization and the work and expense of putting on conferences, as well as enlarging our circle of colleagues.

Another way in which the Board is preparing for the future is with some reorganization and long range planning. Our Past President, Jennifer Johnston, has been assembling and updating the job descriptions for Board positions and our Webmaster, Jim Ranalli will soon be posting them on our web site (www.midtesol.org). A small task force of Board members is meeting to plan a few years further out than in the past to get a better start on some of our larger undertakings, such as conferences. We hope these efforts will make for smoother coordination and more continuity.

While this is billed as my Farewell Presidential message, and I am in fact leaving that position, I am happy to say I will not be leaving the Board, but will be moving into the Past President's

position. One of my charges in that position will be to find people who are interested in joining the Board or moving into new positions in fall 2011. So if you have an interest in expanding your professional horizons with great colleagues and encountering some surprises along the way while providing much-appreciated service to the profession, do introduce yourself to me at the conference or send me an email!

Suzanne van der Valk



You still have time to register!

Go to www.midtesol.org for registration and conference schedule information.

MIDTESOL 2010 CONFERENCE



Hotel Julien Dubuque, Iowa

October 22-23, 2010



Dr. Don Weasenforth
TESOL Affiliate Leadership Council Chair

CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS

Deadline August 15

www.midtesol.org

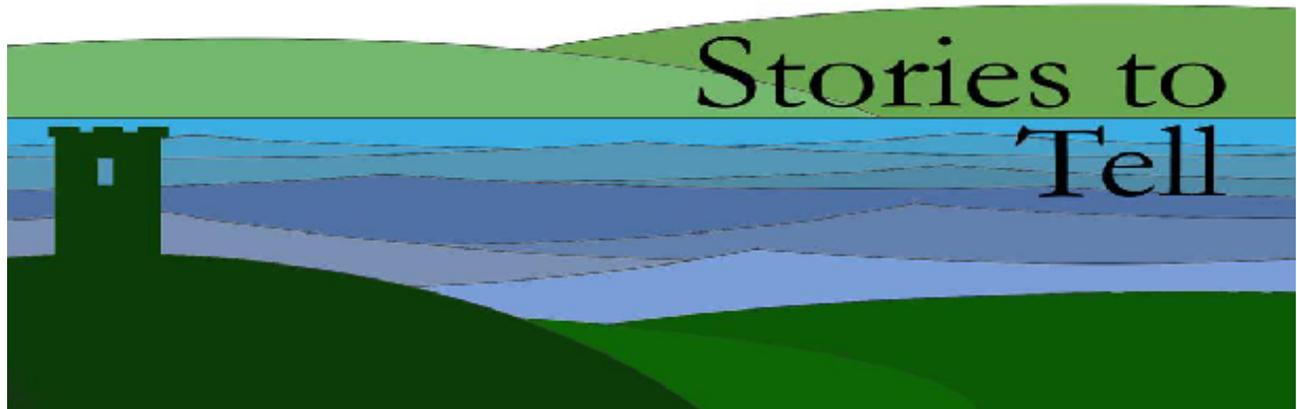
CALL FOR VENDORS

www.midtesol.org

Plenary: The Power of Narrative in Research and Learning: Taking Alice's Lead

Workshop: Leveraging 2.0 Technologies to Support Learner Autonomy

“The face of the river, in time, became a wonderful book . . . delivering its most cherished secrets . . .” Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*



MIDTESOL Board Candidates

On October 23rd, 2010, MIDTESOL members will be asked to vote on the following candidates at our Annual Membership Meeting. Please review the following candidate information and come ready to vote! All positions are open to write-in candidates on the day of election as long as the candidate approves the inclusion of his/her name.

MIDTESOL OCTOBER 2010 ELECTION SLATE

Candidate for Treasurer: Sarah Henderson-Lee, *Lindenwood University, St. Charles, MO.*

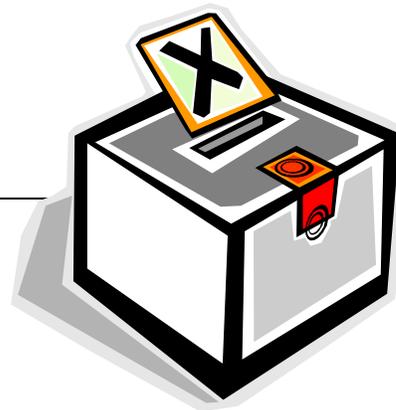
Sarah Henderson Lee is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Composition and TESOL at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She recently accepted a TESOL teacher education position with Lindenwood University in St. Charles. Prior to this position, Sarah was an ESL instructor for the Springfield, MO, Public Schools and served on the MIDTESOL board as the K-12 interest section leader for the past 2 years. Additionally, she has English language teaching experience in adult education/refugee programs, intensive English programs, college writing programs, and teacher training programs abroad.

Candidate for Vice-President: Open

As you can see, the position for Vice-President is open. Those nominated so far have declined to have their names put on the ballot, so a second nomination period has been opened. You should have received an email from MIDTESOL president, Suzanne van der Valk, regarding this situation.

Appointed position—Historian: Roberta Morgan, *University of Missouri, Rolla*

Appointed position—Rules and Regulations: Terry Barakat, *Missouri State University, Springfield*



See you at the members' meeting on the 23rd!

We need your help!!!

Please submit state news to your member-at-large! News about your school projects, professional triumphs, or other pertinent information is welcome.

Here are the email addresses again:

MO: Paula Moore: paulamoore@missouristate.edu;

IA: Rachel Herman— herman@ucmo.edu

Our communication gets better and better with help from our membership! Thank you!

MIDTESOL News



News from the Membership Chair, Amber Wadley

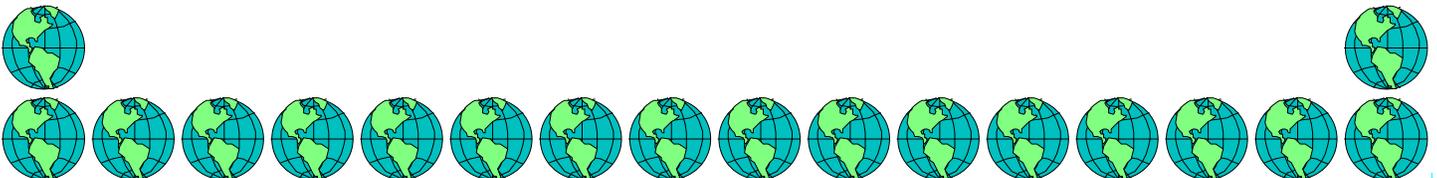
Hello all! I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Amber Wadley , and I have served as an ESOL teacher for Springfield Public Schools in Missouri for several years. I am currently a Counselor for the district, but English Language Learners are never far from my heart. For this reason, I am excited to serve in the MIDTESOL organization as the Membership Chair.

As your new membership chair, I would like to offer you some information, as well as some words of encouragement.

- We are currently at about 150 members, and I am receiving requests for new membership on a weekly basis.
- Please continue to recruit new members to our organization.

Please make sure we have your current contact information. If you move, or change your email address, please do not forget to contact me at adw806s@gmail.com so that we have your current information.

Thank you!
Amber Wadley
Membership Chair



<p>Missouri State News, submitted by Paula Moore, Missouri Member-at-Large</p> <p>In the past six months, there have been quite a number of interesting developments related to international education in the state of Missouri. The Missouri Consortium, consisting of a number of Missouri institutions of higher education, was recently formed to promote Missouri colleges and universities internationally. Related to this, our state congress recently passed HCR 24, which encourages colleges and universities in the state to promote international education.</p> <p>Additionally, the regional NAFSA conference was held in Kansas City this year, which provided several universities in Missouri the unique opportunity to host a group of Iraqi delegates visiting Missouri. The delegation visited universities in St. Louis, Rolla, Colum-</p>	<p>bia, and Springfield before attending NAFSA to explore higher education opportunities in the U.S. to prepare for the Iraqi Initiative, a program designed to provide scholarships to thousands of Iraqi nationals wishing to study in the U.S.</p> <p>K-12 has also seen a very important new development as Missouri recently became a member of the WIDA consortium, dedicated to promoting nationwide standards for course design and assessment for ELL. WIDA provides a new standardized assessment state-wide for ELL students. Additionally, there are a number of professional development workshops this summer related to WIDA, as well as a number of other ELL-related workshops.</p> <p>Finally, congratulations to Missouri State's and Central Missouri State's IEPs: both received CEA accreditation this year!</p>
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Being on the Frontline: Bringing NSs and NNSs Together by Joan Chamberlin, MIDTESOL Socio-Political Chair, joancham@iastate.edu

Last fall an urgent reality was pressed on me from different sources - a reality that our English learning students seem to face with alarming regularity.

I listened to a presenter at Iowa State University's conference on Technology and Second Language Learning summarize the study of Donald Rubin (1992) in which native English speaking American university students ranked the spoken delivery of a lecture. The only variable between groups of subjects was the photo shown of the lecturer. If the lecturer was perceived to be a person from a different country, their comprehensibility was rated lower, even though the audio was no different for each group.

While still pondering the ramifications of this study, I took a break between presentations to look at an exhibition in the same campus building. The exhibit showed photographic portraits paired with the words of newcomers to Iowa from different countries, including refugees, graduate students and factory workers. The large panels of text next to each intimate portrait captured some personal stories with familiar immigrant themes, stories of loss, loneliness, and isolation. But one story stood out. It was a story of terrifying intolerance, not to be expected in our well-educated, quiet town in this new millennium.

This story came from a young woman who is studying at Iowa State. She tells the story of being threatened as she and two Spanish-speaking friends waited for a bus in the evening near the ISU campus:

"We were coming back from the game. It was the first game of the season. We stopped in the bus stop and I heard a comment from a guy that was on the other side of the street, "Stop f*** speaking Spanish." We decided to ignore the situation because we are so used to that ...we just learn how to ignore it. He didn't like the fact that we were ignoring him. He was being very aggressive, and at one point he said "you don't belong here" and I answered him, "you neither" because I understood that this country was made by immigrants, but I guess he wasn't smart enough to know that fact.

He got even more mad, he kept saying a lot of things until he said, "I will f*** kill you."

We got really scared and we kept walking faster but he kept yelling at us very aggressively and shaking hands and walking toward us. At some moment, he turned back but my intuition told me keep walking fast but keep looking back. I noticed on the other side of the sidewalk there was somebody walking, hiding in the shadow. I realized it was that guy. I told my friend to take out the cell phone if we need to call 911, because the

guy was following us and we all got really scared and we started walking even more fast and we noticed that he started walking more fast - at our rhythm.

At some point he started running very aggressively toward us and we freaked out. I thought "Oh God, help us." I thought he probably will hit us or have a knife. But thank God when he ran toward us we held hands, the three of us, and he just passed by and kept passing."

The person who made the portraits and recorded these stories is my husband, Dennis Chamberlin, a professor of journalism and photojournalist. I have been present as he listened to and edited these texts and we have both raised this topic with various colleagues and international students. The story above is not an unusual exception, but a repeated experience in the lives of people we know. If you start asking your international friends about their experiences, you might be surprised what you find.

One of my most charming South Korean students described to me how she was harassed for speaking Korean at an Iowa Cubs game in Des Moines. You can imagine the scene, two fashionable Korean young women happily munching on their all-American hot dogs, chatting, and enjoying this cultural moment, being reduced to silence by an intolerant baseball fan. Our Bosnian neighbor regularly gets visits from the police because other neighbors suspect him of any minor mishap that occurs in our neighborhood. This man is a Jesuit-educated former English teacher and war refugee.

Why am I relaying these stories in a newsletter for ESL professionals? It seems to me that as professionals who work with newcomers and international visitors, we could consider ourselves on the frontline of establishing a tolerance for, or better, an appreciation for a multilingual society. But how can we do that?

I'm sure there are many approaches that have been used and that could be used to encourage an openness to multilingualism, but one concrete idea presented itself to me as I returned to the TSLL conference proceedings and listened to our plenary speaker, Dr. Tracey Derwing. Her talk summarized what she saw as the utopian approach to L2 pronunciation teaching. One point in her formula was a "focus on native speaker listeners."

Native speaker listeners can be trained, she argued. But the "training", it turns out, is nothing sophisticated. In a study by Okim Kang (2008), native speaker raters of the speech of International Teaching Assistants found the speech "less accented when they

had to rate them a second time after spending an hour informally with them. This is rather a surprising finding because the intervention could be considered too short in duration and too weak in intensity to bring about any profound change. However, it implies that informal and pleasant contact with interpersonal intimacy and equality can bring a positive change in undergraduate attitudes toward ITAs and consequently influence undergraduates' perceptions of ITA speech performances..."

So an hour of pizza and chat made a significant difference in the perceptions of the American students. An experience I had with IEP students in April seems to go along with this finding. During events to highlight the first amendment to the constitution, American undergraduates were invited to some advanced level IEP classes to present some first amendment issues about freedom of speech and the press. The American students were encouraged to involve the IEP students in discussion and to bring in issues from their home countries. Both groups of student reported that they had enjoyed and benefited from the discussion. Two days later, as I stood in line with my IEP students for an open-air lunch and soapbox debate, the American students who had visited our class walked up to our class and greeted my students like it was old home week. The American students invited them to other events. My students were grinning, chatting, happy.

My question to you is how we can help our international students break that ice of nervousness and also help native English speaking students make contact with individuals who have taken on the monumental and rewarding task of functioning in a new language. Perhaps you have created program at your school to bring these students together. If you have, please send me your stories. My aim is to gather ideas for promoting an open, tolerant, welcoming population of native English speakers.

I look forward to hearing from you.

References:

Kang, O. (2008). Ratings of L2 oral performance in English: Relative impact of rater characteristics and acoustic measures of accent-ness. *Spann Fellow Working Papers in Second or Foreign Language Assessment*, 6, 181-205.

Rubin, D.L. (1992). Nonlanguage factors affecting undergraduates' judgments of non-native English-speaking teaching assistants. *Research in Higher Education*, 33, 511-31.

To contact the editor,

E-mail:

morrison.jennifer1@sbcglobal.net



About our Organization

MIDTESOL is a professional organization, an affiliate of International TESOL, whose goal is to support teachers and enhance the teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

MIDTESOL Matters is a quarterly publication and is distributed to subscribers and dues-paying members of MIDTESOL. Articles, Teaching Tips, and Reviews are welcome from all members. The editor reserves the right to edit for space, clarity, or editorial balance. Materials published in MIDTESOL Matters become the property of MIDTESOL and could be shared with other TESOL affiliate organizations.

Expressed opinions do not necessarily reflect the views of MIDTESOL, TESOL, or the MIDTESOL Executive Board.

Editor's Corner—The Politics of Language

By Jennifer Morrison, K-4 ESL Teacher, Springfield, MO



For this edition of our *Matters*, I was wondering if I would have anything to share with you, not wanting to re-hash issues already discussed but still close to my heart. Thankfully, Joan Chamberlin submitted her timely article dealing with attitudes that our students deal with on a daily basis. Her article submission coincided with a heated “discussion” I recently found myself in with a long-time friend regarding language diversity. These 2 conversations lead me to address this issue in my editorial this time around.

As Joan mentioned in her article (see page 5), our students often face discrimination and threats even in places where they should feel safe. This has been true throughout the history of our country, and, sadly, I am not surprised when my students tell me stories such as the one relayed by Joan (although I am always concerned and sickened by such actions). When I was teaching at an IEP and in higher education, the negative attitudes appeared to be for different reasons (fear of a student’s ethnicity, etc.). However, since moving into public school teaching, I have seen quite different reasons for animosity towards my students and their families. I have learned that many people do not believe that their tax dollars should go towards educating the children of illegal immigrants (even though no one really knows who is and is not legal since the law prohibits schools from asking for immigration information), and some in more conservative camps even go so far as to say that **any** student whose first language is not English should not be allowed to “drain our tax dollars” with spe-

cial ESL instruction, whether or not they are in the country legally.

These attitudes are not new to our country, and these attitudes do not surprise me when I think about human history. Most of us would agree that when economic times are tough, these feelings strengthen and grow. Couple that with an election season with unusually heightened rhetoric and extreme nationalistic, ethnocentric ideals, which most often are based on misinformation and fear, and you get an even greater reaction against anyone whose first language is not English. We have probably all heard comments, maybe even from our close friends and relatives, regarding the linguistic situation in our country. I have even had it suggested to me that the reason for the fall of all great civilizations has been their allowing linguistic diversity, which eventually split the nation and caused it to fall. Admittedly, this argument is flawed on many levels, but it is also disturbing that this belief is “out there” in the populous.

We know that our students face these feelings about not only their ethnicity, but also their language, every day. In public schools, we try to teach tolerance and valuing of other cultures, while at the same time, fear and misinformation is presented in the media and at home. The question that faces us as English Language Educators is, as Joan mentions, “how do we help native English speaking students make contact with individuals who have taken on the monumental and rewarding task of functioning in a new language.” I would like to add to that: how do we help families in our K-12 communities learn to value “other-ness” when it

comes to our immigrant and refugee families? These are challenges that have faced communities for generations, and we know that there **are** solutions that will at least help foster understanding and cooperation, solutions that might be able to bring people together instead of push them apart.

I, too, look forward to continuing this conversation as our members send ideas to Joan regarding “what works” when addressing these issues. I would also like to hear from anyone who happens to attend the conference in Dubuque where I will be presenting about my experiences at TESOL Advocacy Day.

I know that I say this all the time, but I have to finish with another statement that celebrates my wonderfully amazing students who impress me on so many levels each and every day. I know that if all of those people out there who do not know my students could meet them and hear their stories, they would change their minds about what a valuable thing linguistic diversity is in a world that is quickly shrinking.